

Minutes of the Jan. 4, 2011, TPES PTA meeting

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by President Shruti Bhatnagar.

Teacher breakout sessions were first, with kindergarten parents meeting with Ms. Dieguez, first grade with Ms. Albers, and second grade with Ms. Scott-Clayton.

Ms. Bhatnagar reported that the 5K race will be held Sunday, May 1, and the book fair will be held the week of Feb. 7. Help is also needed to plan the TPES float for the Takoma Park Fourth of July parade, she said.

Principal Gadsden then reported that the school year is going very well. Morning and afternoon dropoff and pickup issues in the car lane have been worked out, she said, with the new requirement that parents remain in their cars while staff load or unload children. She said afternoon pickup was completed in about five minutes with the new system. She apologized to any parent offended by the newsletter notice that parents who do not comply with the new system or threaten staff in any way will be issued a "Do Not Trespass" letter barring them from bringing their car onto school property, but said it would be used only as a last resort. She clarified that cars may be parked in the striped lane between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. In response to a parent complaint, the principal clarified that the school requests that children exit cars from the passenger side to avoid unloading into the traffic lane.

The principal then reported on Montgomery County's plans to implement an integrated curriculum at elementary schools. This curriculum is being tried by two first grade classrooms this year but MCPS plans to make it mandatory for everyone starting next year. She shared that Integrated curriculum meant all subjects integrating together as they are being taught. She shared that this system will not work well at TPES the reason being that majority of students in our school community need intervention since many children are at different reading and math levels. She said that she has already shared her concerns with MCPS. County staff are aware of the problems posed for TPES by the integrated curriculum and understand the problem. They are working with Mrs. Gadsden to figure out a solution on how this curriculum can be implemented at TPES or to see if TPES can be exempted from this system, but have not worked out a solution yet, she said. More update will be shared when some progress is made on this.

The last topic discussed was indoor recess, with several parents urging the school to help children to be active at recess even if it is held indoors. Mrs. Gadsden told everyone that there were several factors that were taken into consideration and effect the decision to have indoor recess. She said that until last year MCPS had a policy restricting indoor recess if temperature fell to 32 or below but that is not the case anymore. Everyday the school evaluates the feel of the temperature outside and if it is a sunny day or the windchill is not too bad, children are sent outside for recess. She also shared that the school is already exploring alternatives to classrooms for indoor recess, including use of the bus room. The gym is in use for PE classes during recess, she said. She also shared that the Gym is technically the gym teacher's work place and cannot

be used as his work materials are set out for gym activities but even if it was used it would not be possible to accommodate all children from one grade in the gym at one time for active playtime. Another problem is the limited number of staff to supervise recess, she said.

The PTA agreed to form a committee to explore ways to improve indoor recess. Parents Stacey Palosky (palosky@gmail.com) and Danielle Levitan (dlevitan@thinkabout.com) agreed to head the committee. This will be a standing / temporary committee of parents who will come up with ideas for activities that can be provided to children during indoor recess for active playtime. PTA President, Ms. Bhatnagar shared with the parents at the meeting that once the committee puts these ideas together the committee chairs should send these ideas to her so she can work with the Principal to make sure that further action is taken to implement them. Parents interested in getting involved with this committee should contact the committee chairs at their e-mail address given above.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Desmond

Meeting Secretary